

**THE CHRIST OF
FAITH AND THE
JESUS OF HISTORY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649289165

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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LONDON

JAMES CLARKE & CO., LIMITED

13 & 14, FLEET STREET, E.C.4

PREFACE

IN most of the churches there are a not inconsiderable number of persons, leal-hearted in their acceptance of the lordship of Jesus, who have difficulties in regard to what they suppose to be the officially authoritative expression of the Christian faith. They have difficulties, for example, in regard to some of the ways in which convictions, involved in the confession of the lordship of Jesus, are expressed in the doctrinal creeds, and in regard to the use to which these creeds are put. They find some things in the creeds a burden for the intellect, not a liberating and gladdening power for the spirit; and these things, they feel, are somehow out of touch with the ideals of their Lord. They are conscious that their ways of thinking are considered by many of their fellow Christians as inconsistent with membership in the church, in whose fellowship they have learned to know and love their Lord. They are at heart attached to the Christian Society with its great traditions, with its manifold helpful influences for fostering Christian life and character,

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and with its immense opportunities for rendering the highest kind of service to their day and generation. But, too often, under the pressure of their perplexity, their enthusiasm for the Christian Society wanes, and their effective service to its well-being slackens. Their loyalty to Jesus as Lord is not shaken ; it is, partly, at least, loyalty to the Jesus of the Gospels which has brought them to what they recognise to be an unhappy situation.

An additional perplexity may to some extent trouble them. It is alleged in some quarters that if we go "back to Christ" it may be found that the Jesus of history will not justify the convictions, that Jesus is not merely a great religious teacher, but the Redeemer and Leader of humanity ; that the God with whom Christians have to do, and whom they worship is God revealed in Jesus ; that a devotion is due to Jesus other than that which can be paid to the greatest religious teacher. If this were true, the cry "Back to Christ" would bring up these perplexed individuals in uncongenial latitudes. The Christ, who is at the heart of the confession : Jesus is Lord, would then be not the Jesus of history, but the creation of the followers of Jesus from the apostolic age onwards. Such a conclusion, were it demanded by the historical

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facts, as we think it is not, would mean that the lordship of Jesus would be robbed of its deepest significance, and devotion to Jesus would be reduced to reverence for one who is on the same plane with other great religious teachers.

It is in view of such difficulties and perplexities that this volume has been written, and with the hope that such an answer will be given to some of the questions which have been raised as will help to strengthen loyalty to Jesus, "the Lord of all good life," and to the Christian Society through which the spirit of Christ works for the realisation of the divine purpose with the human family.

The subject—the relation of the Jesus of history to the Christ of faith—with one aspect of which this volume deals, may well have a special interest to-day for the churches as well as for individuals. They are all eager to discover how they may minister more successfully to the needs of a sorely distracted world. Each branch of the Christian Society is disposed to believe that some of the other branches have in some measure departed from the ideals of Jesus. May it not be the wisdom of each branch to be willing to re-examine some of its accepted ideals in the light of that standard? Might not such a